

Testimony of Grace Herman, LMSW
Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter
Submitted to the Appropriations Committee
Wednesday February 23, 2022

Honorable Chairmen, Ranking Members, and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Grace Herman and I am a volunteer advocate for the Alzheimer's Association CT Chapter. The Alzheimer's Association leads the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on H.B. No. 5037 (COMM) AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023 regarding the Alzheimer's State Respite Program.

As a social worker that primarily works with those living with dementia, I have encountered many barriers in being able to assist this population with getting connected with community-based services, especially for those with younger onset dementia. Many of the community-based programs identify an age requirement of 65 years and older and therefore those living with young onset dementia are excluded from these often vital programs. I have worked with many families who are under so much stress and have tight financial constraints. The Respite Care Program has a huge benefit for those living with dementia. The Respite Care program can provide those living with dementia the opportunity to attend a local day program where they can have structure and routine while providing much needed relief for family members and caregivers. The Respite Program allows those living with dementia to remain in the community successfully. Dementia does not discriminate on age or limit itself to one specific population, the Respite Care Program should be expanded to support everyone living with dementia and their family care partners.

With the average yearly cost of nursing home care over \$165,000, increasing funding for the Alzheimer's Respite Care program is more cost-efficient and honors consumer choice. On average, a person with Alzheimer's lives four to eight years after diagnosis, but can live as long as 20 years, depending on other factors. Home and Community Based Services including the Alzheimer's Respite Care Program are the less costly option and create autonomy in the home.

Increasing funding for this program to meet the growing needs of Connecticut's changing demographics is good policy, fiscally smart, and supports a person's wish to age in place with dignity.

Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to provide comment on this bill.